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LEFTOVERS OF A DISSOLVED EMPIRE: ASSESSING THE POLITICAL
STABILITY OF THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS OF KAZAKHSTAN,
GEORGIA, AND THE UKRAINE

By

TARALEIGH DAVIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science
in the College of Science
and the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida

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Thesis Chair: Houman Sadri, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

The intent of this thesis is to explore why when compared to the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Georgia there is a measure of stability in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has made it a priority to slowly build a sense of its own nationalism after decades of Soviet control. In over 20 years of independence it has only known violence for an 18-month period. The Republic of Kazakhstan has gone from the leftovers from a dissolved empire to a stable regional power. Kazakhstan's hegemony in Asia and peaceful ethnic-governmental relations has made it possible for Kazakhstan to have a multi-faceted foreign policy with Russia, China, and the United States and this paper will try to answer the question of how this has been possible.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CONTEXT	1
SIGNIFICANCE	1
HYPOTHESIS	2
LITERATURE REVIEW	3
RESEARCH DESIGN	12
CONCLUSION	13
CHAPTER TWO: KAZAKSTAN	15
INTRODUCTION	15
GEOGRAPHY	15
HISTORY	16
ECONOMY	18
POLITICS	19
Government Structure	19
Important Political Players.....	20
Ethnic-Government Relations	21
Language.....	22
Religion.....	22
FOREIGN POLICY	23
Security	24
CONCLUSION	26
CHAPTER THREE: GEORGIA	28
INTRODUCTION	28
GEOGRAPHY	28
HISTORY	29
ECONOMY	31
POLITICS	32
Government Structure.....	33
ETHNIC-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS	34
DemographicS.....	34
Language.....	35
Religion.....	35
FOREIGN POLICY	36
CONCLUSION	37
CHAPTER FOUR: UKRAINE	39
INTRODUCTION	39
GEOGRAPHY	39
HISTORY	40

ECONOMY.....	42
POLITICS	43
ETHNIC-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS	44
Demographics	44
Language	45
Religion.....	45
FOREIGN POLICY	45
CONCLUSION.....	47
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	50
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	50
KAZAKHSTAN	52
Foreign Policy.....	52
Economy.....	52
Ethnic-Government Relations.....	53
GEORGIA.....	53
Foreign Policy.....	53
Economy.....	54
Ethnic-Government Relations.....	54
UKRAINE	55
Foreign Policy.....	55
Economy.....	55
Ethnic-Government Relations.....	56
Conclusion	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 51

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Kazakhstan is the largest of the countries in Central Asia, a country bridging east to west, perched on the border between Europe and Asia.¹ Compared to the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Georgia there is a measure of stability as a country. Political stability for the sake of this research will be measured by lack of violent revolution in the country. Kazakhstan has made it a priority to slowly build a sense of its own nationalism after decades of Soviet control.² In over 20 years of independence it has only known violence for an 18 month period.³ It has not experienced the violent revolution that countries such as the Ukraine and Georgia have experienced. This paper will attempt to identify what exactly makes Kazakhstan different from other former Soviet Republics. The Republic of Kazakhstan has gone from the leftovers from a dissolved empire to a stable regional power. Kazakhstan's hegemony in Asia and peaceful ethnic-governmental relations has made it possible for Kazakhstan to have a multi-vector foreign policy with Russia, China, and the United States.⁴ Its post-Soviet journey has not been without its challenges. Throughout the history of Kazakhstan the country has never known democracy.⁵ It has been a land full of nomadic heritage and occupation. Democracy is a foreign concept to many and therefore challenging to implement.

SIGNIFICANCE

This topic is significant for many reasons. The political stability, of former Soviet Republics, especially Kazakhstan, have important global ramifications. In the case of Kazakhstan

many countries are interested in investing in the vast oil resources of the country.⁶ Kazakhstan has reached a certain level of hegemony in Asia. Political stability is also key in the region because of its proximity to different Muslim militant groups from Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.⁷ Having stability in nations makes it harder for militant Islam to take hold. Each of the three case studies in this thesis, Kazakhstan, Georgia and the Ukraine hold key geopolitical positions that impact both Asia and Europe. The countries for each case study were chosen for the fact of their varying levels of revolution in their country since independence.

HYPOTHESIS

This thesis will focus on the political stability of the former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Georgia, and the Ukraine. Political stability by definition in this paper comes from the political stability index from www.theglobaleconomy.com. It is how likely there is a “disorderly transfer of government, armed conflict, violent demonstrations, social unrest, terrorism, ethnic or religious conflict.”⁸ In each case study the following will serve as independent variables: economy, ethnic-government relations and foreign policy. The dependent variable in this thesis is the political stability of Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Ukraine. I hypothesize that Kazakhstan’s commitment to invest in ethnic-government relations, make the economy a priority, and a multi-vector foreign policy have contributed to the overall stability of the nation. The paper will present three case studies: Kazakhstan, Georgia and the Ukraine. These case studies were chosen for two reasons. There is a strong, positive relationship between each of these variables. In each case where there are good ethnic government

relations there is higher political stability. In the country of Ukraine ethnic-government relations and economy are poor and they have difficulties in their foreign policy especially with Russia. Ukraine has experienced the most violent revolutions out of the three case studies.⁹ Georgia has moderate issues with economy, ethnic-government relations and foreign policy. They experienced the Rose Revolution in 2003 and war post-2008.¹⁰ Kazakhstan has the most political stability of the three countries and I hope to find in my research if that is mainly due to their investment in ethnic-government relations or if the other variables are intertwined and also contribute to the stability of the country.¹¹ Does Kazakhstan's political stability have more to do with the fact that they have immense natural resources or is it because their government has the National Assembly and their leader is committed to ethnic harmony¹²?

LITERATURE REVIEW

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, its former republics were left to forge their own history. Scholars have documented in detail the history and issues each one of these countries have faced since independence. This literature review is divided up into three parts: resources on Kazakhstan, moving on to resources on Georgia, and finishing with information on the Ukraine. Each section of country specific literature is presented in chronological fashion.

Ian Bremmer in his article "Minority Rules," written in 1994 sees the potential for ethnic issues in newly formed Kazakhstan. He argues that Kazakhstan is headed for the ethnic conflict that has shaken much of the former Communist world. Of all the former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan has what may be the toughest interethnic predicament—a population of

ethnic Russians that is almost as large as the population of ethnic Kazakhs. As of 1993, Russians accounted for 37 percent of the population and Kazakhs 42 percent. President Nursultan Nazarbayev wants to build a strong unitary state by increasing control over the Russian-dominated provinces of the north. This strategy is wholeheartedly authoritarian, focusing on three major initiatives—replacement of the northern political elites, population movement, and Kazakh culture and language popularization. Russians are growing anxious about their future, and they are working quietly against policies that they view as Kazakhization. Ethnic violence is increasing, and the idea of secession has become increasingly popular.¹³ Also in 1995, Shirin Akiner writes in his book, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity from Tribe to Nation-State*, about how contemporary Kazakh identity is being formed through the fusion of various disparate elements drawn from the Kazakh's nomadic and Islamic traditions, as well as from the Russian heritage of the Tsarist and Soviet periods. This book sets this process in the context of post-Soviet nation-building.¹⁴

Many scholars were researching and writing about how Kazakhstan avoided conflict in spite of their country's ethnic make up. Edward Schatz in "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan," shares that with the Soviet collapse, many feared acute conflict between Russians and titular Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, yet conflict was avoided. Like other states, Kazakhstan combined strategies of accommodation to negotiate ethnic divisions and coercion to intimidate would-be ethnic entrepreneurs. "Carrots" and "sticks" help to explain whether ethnic divisions turn conflictual, but they are insufficient in determining outcomes. His article highlights elite framing strategies adopted by authorities that might be called "internationalism with an ethnic face," designed to gloss over contradictory practices vis-à-vis a multiethnic

population.¹⁵ Sébastien Peyrouse writes another article in 2007 that deals with the large Russian minority in Kazakhstan, "Nationhood and the Minority Question in Central Asia. The Russians in Kazakhstan." This article aims to present the situation of the Russian minority in Kazakhstan and to stress the political, social and identity evolutions in this country since independence in 1991. It develops three main points: the non-homogeneous nature of Russians in Kazakhstan; the development of non-ethnic allegiances that could explain the failure of the local Russian political parties; and the difficulties the leaders have in choosing between the defense of the political rights and the cultural rights of the country's first minority. In order to examine these issues, this article focuses on a series of issues: the place of the national question in the Kazakh public debate; the process of linguistic and ethnic Kazakhisation; the political activities of the Russian minority; the Cossack issue and the stakes of autonomist claims; and, finally, the issue of emigration and the narrative of the 'return' to Russia.¹⁶

Nathan Paul Jones explores an important topic in looking at the ethnic governmental relations in Kazakhstan in regards to the Assembly of the Peoples on Kazakhstan. In 2010 he wrote an article titled, "'Assembling' A Civic Nation In Kazakhstan: The Nation-Building Role Of The Assembly Of The Peoples Of Kazakhstan." In this article he describes how the countries of the former Soviet Union inherited a unique system for managing the needs of ethnic minorities. The question is how these countries utilize Soviet constructs to develop policies suitable for their distinct political contexts. Kazakhstan's leaders have chosen to fashion a multiethnic civic nation and established the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan to oversee the work of creating a uniform national identity. His article discusses major theories pertaining to civic nation-building, highlights the Soviet approach to building a civic nation, and describes how the

ideology, form, and activities of the Assembly contribute to civic nation-building in Kazakhstan. Finally, he goes on to describe his own ethnographic research demonstrating how people react to Kazakhstan's civic nation-building efforts. The paper argues that Kazakhstan's attempts to create a civic national identity are failing because it has not yet provided a consolidating national discourse as strong as socialism was during the Soviet period.¹⁷ To understand the makings of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan I consulted a book written by President Nazarbayev himself called, *The Concept of Peace and Public Consent*. This book published in 2014 is a compilation of different speeches from the President and how Kazakhstan seeks to be a model of ethnic harmony.¹⁸

Finally I gleaned a lot of information on Kazakhstan as a country from the book by Jeremy Tredinnick titled *An Illustrated History Of Kazakhstan : Asia's Heartland In Context*. Written in 2014, it is a wonderfully illustrated book that reveals the full history of the heart of Central Asia across the ages, focusing on the region that is modern-day Kazakhstan. Using essays from renowned archaeologists, historians and scholars as the core of each chapter, this book explains Kazakhstan's long and complex history. This flowing narrative is complemented by a range of beautiful maps and images, from exquisite museum pieces to landscapes that place you within the beautiful environment that molded the region's social fabric. The book takes the reader on a journey from pre-history when changing climate and habitats opened up new areas to human migration, through the globally significant era of the warrior nomads and city-states along the trading routes between East and West, to the colonization of Central Asia by Imperial Russia and the chaos of the Soviet period. Independence for the Central Asian

states has seen Kazakhstan take a leading role in the region, and the exciting prospects of this modern state suggest a future as rich and engaging as its past.¹⁹

The resources on the Republic of Georgia begin with a book by Ronald Suny written in 1994 titled, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. In this book Suny writes about the independent republic of Georgia is reinventing its past, recovering what had been forgotten or distorted during the long years of Russian and Soviet rule. Whether Georgia can successfully be transformed from a society rent by conflict into a pluralistic democratic nation will depend on Georgians rethinking their history. Ronald Suny authors the first comprehensive treatment of Georgian history, from the ethnogenesis of the Georgians in the first millennium B.C., through the period of Russian and Soviet rule in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the emergence of an independent republic in 1991, the ethnic and civil warfare that has ensued, and perspectives for Georgia's future.²⁰ In 2005 Jonathan Wheatley in his book *Georgia from national awakening to Rose Revolution : delayed transition in the former Soviet Union*, examines the tortuous process of regime change in Georgia from the first pro-independence protests of 1988 to the aftermath of the so-called Rose Revolution in 2004. It is set within a comparative framework that includes other transition countries, particularly those in the former Soviet Union. The book provides two important theoretical innovations: the notion of a regime, which is an under-theorized concept in the field of transition literature, and O'Donnell, Schmitter and Karl's notion of a dynamic actor-driven transition. The volume turns to the structural constraints that framed the transition in Georgia and in other republics of the former Soviet Union by looking at the state and society in the USSR at the close of the Soviet period. It examines the evolution and nature of the Georgian regime, and ultimately addresses the

theoretical and empirical problems posed by Georgia's so-called Rose Revolution following the falsification of parliamentary elections by the incumbent authorities.²¹

Also in 2005 Zurab and Wertsch take a different approach and look at how the Rose Revolution impacted the history of Georgia. They write about after more than a decade of turmoil and decline, Georgia has emerged as one of the world's most dynamic laboratories of democracy. The major event in this new chapter of its history is the "Rose Revolution." A three week period of political intrigue and public demonstrations in November 2003 led to Eduard Shevardnadze's resignation, and the result was that a demoralized and lethargic society suddenly seemed to turn into an energetic experiment in democracy. Events subsequent to the Rose Revolution suggest that this may be just the beginning of a larger transition, but regardless of where the future leads, this bloodless rebellion will remain a fascinating chapter in its own right. It has left a powerful impression not only on Georgians, but on people throughout the world. Admired by some and deplored by others, it has been observed closely everywhere in the former Soviet states and beyond. The authors present a first historical snapshot of the Rose Revolution and events leading up to it.²²

Mathijs Pelkmans addresses the ethnic issue in Georgia in his book written in 2006 *Defending the border : identity, religion, and modernity in the Republic of Georgia*. This book, one of the first in English about everyday life in the Republic of Georgia, describes how people construct identity in a rapidly changing border region. Based on extensive ethnographic research, it illuminates the myriad ways residents of the Caucasus have rethought who they are since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Through an exploration of three towns in the southwest corner of Georgia, all of which are situated close to the Turkish frontier, Mathijs Pelkmans

shows how social and cultural boundaries took on greater importance in the years of transition, when such divisions were expected to vanish.²³

Also in 2006 Christoph Stefes in his book, *Understanding post-Soviet transitions : Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism*, addresses the corruption in emerging former republics like Georgia. He argues that corruption, collusion and clientelism are pervasive legacies of Soviet rule in most successor states of the Soviet Union. This legacy has been a major obstacle to the development of viable democratic and market institutions. Analyzing the political and economic developments of Armenia and Georgia, this book demonstrates how systemic corruption undermines the rule of law which is crucial for democracy and a market economy. It argues that the tumultuous political transition of Georgia has created an anarchic system of corruption that is disastrous for economic development and people's welfare. In contrast, the Armenian government has maintained some control over the corrupt system, ameliorating the consequences of systemic corruption.²⁴ Irakly Areshidze addresses the transitional nature of the Republic of Georgia as well as another perspective on the Rose Revolution in the book, *Democracy and autocracy in Eurasia : Georgia in transition*, written in 2007. In it he writes that many politicians, pundits, and scholars in the West have hailed Georgia for its transition to democracy, lavishing particular praise on the "Rose Revolution" of November 2003, during which the long-standing president Eduard Shevardnadze resigned and handed over his office to the charismatic young leader Mikheil Saakashvili. The Rose Revolution takes its name from the flowers that Saakashvili and his supporters carried with them when they publicly disputed the results of the parliamentary elections of early November. Images of tens of thousands of people protesting outside the Parliament were broadcast throughout the world and have

encouraged the impression that the Rose Revolution was a genuine revolt of the electorate that led to sweeping changes throughout the government. This is simply a myth, according to Irakly Areshidze, who was a high-ranking political consultant in Georgia during the time of the revolution.²⁵ Stephen Jones wrote a basic overview of the political history of Georgia in 2012. *Georgia: a Political History Since Independence*, recounts how Georgia emerged from the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991 with the promise of swift economic and democratic reform. But that promise remains unfulfilled. Economic collapse, secessionist challenges, civil war and the failure to escape the legacy of Soviet rule, culminating in the 2008 war with Russia, characterize a two-decade struggle to establish democratic institutions and consolidate statehood. Here, Stephen Jones critically analyses Georgia's recent political and economic development, illustrating what its 'transition' has meant, not just for the state, but for its citizens as well.²⁶

In the study of the country of Ukraine scholars have been fascinated by the heated and tense relationship between the Ukraine and Russia. Anatol Lieven in this book *Ukraine & Russia: a Fraternal Rivalry* written in 1999, recognizes the pitfalls in Ukrainian-Russian relations and writes lucidly about the many elements in play, including the shadow cast by the Ukrainian leadership's dismal economic performance.²⁷

In 2005 Ukraine experienced the Orange Revolution The remarkable popular protest in Kiev and across Ukraine following the cooked presidential election of November 2004 has transformed the politics of eastern Europe. Andrew Wilson witnessed the events firsthand and here looks behind the headlines to ascertain what really happened and how it will affect the future of the region. It is a dramatic story: an outgoing president implicated via secret tape-

recordings in corruption and murder; a shadowy world of political cheats and manipulators; the massive covert involvement of Putin's Russia; the poisoning of the opposition challenger; and finally the mass protest of half a million Ukrainians that forced a second poll and the victory of Viktor Yushchenko. As well as giving an account of the election and its aftermath, the book, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* examines the broader implications of the Orange Revolution and of Russia's serious miscalculation of its level of influence. It explores the likely chain reaction in Moldova, Belarus, and the nervous autocracies of the Caucasus, and points to a historical transformation of the geopolitics of Eurasia.²⁸

For a basic overview of Ukrainian history this thesis gathered information from *Ukraine: an illustrated history* written by Paul Magocsi in 2007. In this book he provides a concise and easy to read historical survey of the country from earliest times to the present. Each of the book's forty-six chapters is framed by a historical map, which graphically depicts the key elements of the chronological period or theme addressed within. Rather than limiting his study to an examination of the country's numerically largest population - ethnic Ukrainians - acclaimed scholar Paul Robert Magocsi emphasizes the multicultural nature of Ukraine throughout its history. While ethnic Ukrainians figure prominently, Magocsi also deals with all the other peoples who live or who have lived within the borders of present-day Ukraine: Russians, Poles, Jews, Crimean Tatars, Germans (including Mennonites), and Greeks, among others. This gives easy access to information about political, economic, and cultural development in Ukraine.²⁹

By the time we reach 2015 Ukraine is still reeling from the Orange Revolution. Anders Asulund writes about the country's troubles in *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How to Fix it*. The author describes how Ukraine is in the midst of an existential crisis--its worst crisis since it became independent in December 1991. The country is faced with the threat from the Russian military, its severe financial crisis, and corruption. The author argues a strategy to Ukraine's policy makers on how they might be able to solve the current key problems.³⁰ Addressing corruption and how the Ukraine currently relates to Russia, Taras Kuzio authored, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism*. This book shows the contemporary political, economic, and cultural history from a leading international expert, it is the first single-volume work to survey and analyze Soviet and post-Soviet Ukrainian history since 1953 as the basis for understanding the nation today.³¹

RESEARCH DESIGN

Literature has much to say about each of these countries individually but little in the way of comparing the three of them to each other. This paper's goal will be to dig deep into different aspects of each country to try and determine why there has been a violent revolution and unrest in the Ukraine, a color revolution in Georgia, but no revolution yet in Kazakhstan.

This paper will follow a specific organization with five parts. First, an introductory chapter, chapters two through four will cover the three case studies (Kazakhstan, Georgia and the Ukraine.) The final chapter will be a comparison of the case studies followed by a conclusion.

Each chapter that includes a case study will be divided into subsections: a brief history, an analysis on each country that includes sections on the economy, foreign policy and ethnic-government relations along with demographics and security.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis' objective is to study and compare the political stability of the former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Georgia and the Ukraine. I hope to find how the ethnic-government relations, the economy, and the foreign policies of these countries contribute to the overall political stability. I also hope to fill in the literature gap in comparing these countries with each other and their journey post-Soviet Union.

¹ Glenn E Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1997).

² Nazarbayev, *The Concept of Peace and Public Consent*.

³ Zhulduz Baizakova and Roger N. McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers to Islamic Radicalization in Kazakhstan* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2015), PDF e-book.

⁴ Reuel R. Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics' and Kazakhstan's emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 3 (September 2009): doi:10.1080/19448950903152110.

⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

⁶ Jeremy Tredinnick, *An Illustrated History Of Kazakhstan : Asia's Heartland In Context* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 2014).

⁷ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies*

⁸ "Political Stability by Country, Around the World," TheGlobalEconomy.com, last modified 2015, http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_political_stability/

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- ⁹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2015).
- ¹⁰ Zurab K'arumize and James V. Wertsch, *Enough!: The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia, 2003* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).
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- ¹² Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Russian and CIS Programme, 1995)
- ¹³ Ian Bremmer, "Minority Rules," *New Republic* 210 (1994).
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- ¹⁶ Sébastien Peyrouse, "Nationhood And The Minority Question In Central Asia. The Russians In Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59.3 (2007): 481-501.
- ¹⁷ Nathan P. Jones, "'Assembling' A Civic Nation In Kazakhstan: The Nation-Building Role Of The Assembly Of The Peoples Of Kazakhstan," *Caucasian Review Of International Affairs* 2 (2010): 159.
- ¹⁸ Nazarbayev, *The Concept of Peace and Public Consent*.
- ¹⁹ Jeremy Tredinnick, *An Illustrated History Of Kazakhstan : Asia's Heartland In Context* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 2014).
- ²⁰ Ronald G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
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- ²² Zurab K'arumize and James V. Wertsch, *Enough!: The Rose Revolution in the Republic of Georgia, 2003* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).
- ²³ Mathijs Pelkmans, *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia* (Cornell University Press, 2006).
- ²⁴ Christoph H Stefes, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
- ²⁵ Irakly Areshidze, *Democracy and Autocracy in Eurasia: Georgia in Transition* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007).
- ²⁶ Stephen F Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).
- ²⁷ Anatol Lieven, *Ukraine & Russia : a fraternal rivalry* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1990).
- ²⁸ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine's Orange Revolution* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2005).
- ²⁹ Paul Magocsi, *Ukraine : an illustrated history* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).
- ³⁰ Anders Åslund, *Ukraine: What Went Wrong and How Two Fix It* (Washington, D.C.: Peter G. Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2015).
- ³¹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO: KAZAKSTAN

INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan is the largest of the countries in Central Asia, a country bridging east to west, perched on the border between Europe and Asia. Compared to the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Georgia there is a measure of stability as a country. Kazakhstan has made it a priority to slowly build a sense of its own nationalism after decades of Soviet control. In over 20 years of independence it has only known violence for an 18 month period.³² The Republic of Kazakhstan has gone from the leftovers from a dissolved empire to a stable regional power. Kazakhstan's hegemony in Asia and peaceful ethnic-governmental relations has made it possible for Kazakhstan to have a multi-faceted foreign policy with Russia, China, and the United States. Its post-Soviet journey has not been without its challenges. Throughout the history of Kazakhstan the country has never known democracy. It has been a land full of nomadic heritage and occupation. Democracy is a foreign concept to many and therefore challenging to implement. Kazakhstan's commitment to invest in ethnic-government relations, make the economy a priority, and a multifaceted foreign policy have contributed to the overall stability of the nation.

GEOGRAPHY

Behind Russia, Kazakhstan is the second largest former Soviet Republic. The Republic of Kazakhstan spans over 2,717,300 square kilometers roughly four times the size of Texas or the size of Western Europe. It is the largest landlocked country in the world and the 9th largest overall. The countries bordering Kazakhstan are China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and

Uzbekistan. The terrain of the country has fertile land to the south and includes both the Ural and Altai mountains. There is a steppe that covers one third of the country between the Volga River and Altai Mountains. It is a sparsely populated country, but rich in natural resources.

Kazakhstan is unique in that it has borders of the two of the world's largest lakes in the world, the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea. The country is protected with mountains to the southwest of its borders with China but shares a 6846 kilometer border with the Russia Federation. Part of Kazakhstan lies west of the Ural River and therefore is part of Europe.³³ Air pollution, radioactivity due to Soviet Union nuclear testing and the water level of the Aral Sea are all major geographical concerns for Kazakhstan.

HISTORY

Modern day Kazakhstan was once the home of nomadic tribes of Turkish descent. The main nomadic tribe, the Saka, were extremely violent and participated in many bloody wars. In the 13th century Genghis Khan led a Mogul invasion and Kazakhstan became part of the "Golden Horde." This invasion included destruction of cities and whole groups of people. Eventually the Mongol rule would deteriorate to an unstable land of tribal factions. The first Kazakh State called the Kazakh Khante formed after the end of the Mongol reign. After a tumultuous stage during the Middle Ages, Kazakhstan turned to their trading partner Russia for help and protection from the Dzungars. Peter the Great saw the potential gains for Russia with extending his empire's influence into Central Asia. Russian dominance did not come rushing in as the Mongols. It was slow and calculated. Kazakhstan soon became a part of the Russian

Empire.³⁴ At first the strong economy of Russia helped Kazakhstan, but the benefits were short lived.

After World War I and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the economy literally tanked and the country experienced a horrible famine in 1921. Soviet rule would strengthen and eventually Kazakhstan would become a Soviet Republic. By 1936 it was named the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). It was at that point in time that Kazakhstan became a factory for the USSR. They were the main supplier of grain crops as well as coal, metal and oil. The Kazakh people paid a high price for their duty to the Soviet Union. The “Kazakhstan Tragedy” handed down from Stalin’s collective policies devastated the people of the Kazakh Republic. Many Kazakhs died of starvation and disease and the native Kazakhs soon became a minority. The economy continued to falter because of rigid Soviet policies.³⁵ The Virgin Land Project ravaged the Kazakh countryside. It turned the steppe ecosystem upside down and drained a majority of the Aral Sea. The Soviet Union also use an area of the Kazakh steppe as testing for its atomic bombs.

During the breakup of the Soviet Union Kazakhstan became a sovereign state, the Republic of Kazakhstan. Because of its close economic ties with Russia, it was the last of the member states to leave. The first president of Kazakhstan inherited a stagnant economy, a myriad of nationalities, and the effects of the nuclear testing. Forming a nation would be no easy task. The Soviet Union did leave Kazakhstan a well-educated people with abundant national resources and a working space program on its soil. There was hope for this once stricken state.

President Nazarbayev was put to the task of transitioning to a sovereign state while still keeping decent ties with Russia economically. His skills as a diplomat and strong leader were proven true after Kazakhstan declared independence. Nazarbayev's first order of business was to build a strong economy. Democracy would come later.

ECONOMY

Overall the economy of Kazakhstan is very good considering its background and geopolitical factors. Its income level is listed as "Upper Middle Income."³⁶ Kazakhstan's economy went from critical in the early years to become the first nation from the former Soviet Union to receive an investment grade credit rating. President Nazarbayev made his mission "economy first." Kazakhstan had the daunting task of creating a new economy, with a new currency, with new trade partners and new foreign policy. The country had to go through a phase of state guided privatization. A market economy had to be formed in Kazakhstan to transition from the economy of old to an economy where a middle class could emerge. Initially, this would send poverty levels and unemployment through the roof. Unofficially the numbers for Kazakhstanis below the poverty level were shown to be about 60 percent. Unemployment went from zero right before independence was declared to 13 percent between 1992-1999.

The main exports of Kazakhstan are crude petroleum, petroleum gas, copper, ferroalloys and refined Petroleum. Exports in 2012 totaled 87 billion. The top imports are crude petroleum, railway freight cars and refined petroleum. Kazakhstan's main trade partners include China, Russia, Italy, the Netherlands, and France. In 2015 they became a member of the World Trade Organization. (more on the accomplishments) The numbers do not lie. Unemployment now sits

at 5.1 percent and below poverty level rate only 5.3 percent in 2011. Oil revenues makes up 50% of the government's budget. Due to the sharp decline in oil prices, in October of 2015 the government adjusted their national budget from \$80 per barrel to \$40 per barrel. The Kazakhstan currency has also been affected by the decline. The Central Bank in Kazakhstan decided to "float" the KZT "tenge." The value dropped from 185 KZT/USD in August 2015 to 330 KZT/USD in December of 2015.³⁷

POLITICS

Kazakhstan is a Republic with a strong Presidential Authority. Kazakhstan's constitution describes the state as "democratic, secular and unitary." The first constitution as an independent state was adopted on January 28, 1993. It sought to bridge the gap between old and new political systems. The current constitution has been in place since August 30, 1995. In the constitution there is a heavy emphasis on life, liberty and inalienable rights. The preamble talks of a peace-loving society who wish to take their place on the world stage.

Government Structure

The executive branch, called the government, is made up by the president which elected to a term every five years. He has power to appoint to the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is appointed by the president, but only after he meets with both political parties and the majority of Parliament agrees. The President is the one who initiates most legislative action. The whole government is very dependent of the president. At the end of his or her term the president becomes a senator for life. The government is in charge of

defense and security, social order, budget and socioeconomic directions of the state's policy. They also deal with foreign policy and state properties.

The updated constitution provided for a bicameral parliament made up the Senate and Majilis. The Majilis is made up of proportional representation and has nine members elected from the Assembly of Peoples. The Senate has the duty of nominating the Chairman of the National Bank of Kazakhstan. This helps keep the monetary and credit policy of the country accountable before Parliament

Out of the three branches of government the judiciary branch is the one that is the "least developed."³⁸ It has three "highest courts": the Supreme Court, the State Arbitrate Court and the Constitutional Court. These judges are appointed by the president but their length of term is not specified in the constitution.

Important Political Players

The reign of the Soviet Union initiated a conflict of Islam with Marxism. This struggle is still seen in countries like Kazakhstan today. Unlike other Central Asian countries, the nomadic heritage of Kazakhstan laid the framework of a more "folk Islam." The people did not adhere to the more rigid observance of the religion and had pride in the fact that never adopted hijab.³⁹ There has been a "re-Islamization" effort in Kazakhstan but the government has to be very careful as to not offend the Slavic peoples. Because of the whole "inter-ethnic" focus Islam does not have room to grow as an exclusive doctrine. There has not been a violent demonstration in Kazakhstan from radical Islam.⁴⁰ The government must be careful that its

growing religious freedom policy does not give room for radical groups like the IMU to grab hold.

Ethnic-Government Relations

The most populous of the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan has a population of over fifteen million as of 2011. The people of Kazakhstan are known as Kazaks and make up the majority of the population. Russians are a large minority at about 24 percent. The other ethnic groups in the country are Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tartars, and Germans.⁴¹ At the outset as a sovereign state the Kazakhs were a minority in their own homeland. Unlike many of the former Soviet Republics the majority of Russians decided to emigrate instead of form a separatist movement.⁴²

As a country Kazakhstan has sought to produce a national identity instead of just accommodating minorities. To integrate and fully represent the minority groups after the initial emigration from Kazakhstan the government formed the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan in 1995. This body formed by President Nazarbayev was meant to promote ethnic harmony. The Assembly was deemed a “social institute of interethnic relations harmonization.” The 384 members are appointed by the president of Kazakhstan. The members of the assembly have the ability to elect 9 members to the lower house of parliament. The core values of the government body are peace, friendship, national unity, tolerance, consent. One of the main tasks of the Assembly is to measure laws past to the ethnic harmony and equality outlined in Article 39 of the Kazakhstani constitution.⁴³ Territorial lines were redrawn and the capital moved to the mainly Russian northern portion of the country to aid in ethnic harmony and deter from

separatist groups rising up. The Kazakh constitution also gives permission for its citizens to declare their ethnicity on their passports.

Language

In the Republic of Kazakhstan the state language is Kazakh and the constitution states that the president must be a speaker of the language. It was important in building a nation that the language be preserved. Pro-Kazakh's believe that the key to a nation surviving was in the survival of its language. Instead of having both Russian and Kazakh as a state language it was declared in the Language Law that Kazakh would be the only state language with Russian to be used as inter-ethnic communication. This appeased both groups and did not further alienate the Russians.

Religion

The religious make up of the country is mainly Sunni Muslim followed by Russian Orthodox. Islam has revived since being suppressed during the reign of the Soviet Union. It is not uncommon to see a mosque and cathedral in a city in close proximity. The city of Astana is home to Central Asia's largest mosque, the Hazrat Sultan Mosque.⁴⁴ President Nazarbayev declares a support of equality in religion, "it is necessary to stress our commitment to the principle of the equality of all citizens of the Republic regardless of their nationality, race or religion." The Constitution of Kazakhstan backs this claim by the president and provides for the freedom of religion. Religious organizations are required to be registered to have legal status to accomplish things such as buying or renting property and hiring employees. To combat violent extremism, Kazakhstan's Agency on Religious Affairs blocked over 950 websites they deemed in

appropriate.⁴⁵ The majority of Kazakhs identify themselves as Muslim, but few truly understand what that means. The nomadic ancestry of Kazakhstan made it to where the Islamic faith was ingrained to a shallow extent.⁴⁶

FOREIGN POLICY

Kazakhstan's foreign policy has been a key component of its nation-building.⁴⁷ Regardless of Kazakhstan's hope for a multi-vector foreign policy, its close proximity to the Russian Federation make it the frontrunner on the foreign policy agenda. As the two largest post-Soviet Republics, it is imperative that the relationship remain a priority for both countries. Since Kazakhstan's independence the country has done well with staying close, but not too close to Russia. During the 1990's the Russian Federation had its own homegrown problems to deal with and was not in a place to muscle its way into ties with Kazakhstan. Border disputes were settled without much fanfare and economically. There is military cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia is dominant arms dealer in the region.⁴⁸ President Nazarbayev is not ashamed of the ties his country has with Russia regardless of the growing influence of the United States. It is important for Nazarbayev to keep tensions low as Russia is a major trade and investment partner. One of the issues that caused tensions to rise is the former Soviet space station that Kazakhstan leases to Russia. Kazakhstan feels that they are forced to lease with high risk to their people who live in proximity of the station.

Another global power that Kazakhstan shares a long border with is China. With over 1700 kilometers bordering a country with over a billion people makes China a neighbor that

requires foreign policy attention. Nazarbayev has always been careful in his multi-vector policy to not step on the toes of either Russia or the United States. The President of Kazakhstan has also been careful to not be a colony of Russia and build its ties with other powers. These relationships, especially with countries like China are seen as helping the country offset its dependence on the former mother country. It is a complicated “dance” for both countries to not upset the overlap of interests. President Nazarbayev stated from the beginning, “From the first days of its independence Kazakhstan has pursued a balanced, pragmatic and responsible foreign policy, the main goal of which is to create a favorable international environment for the implementation of priority tasks in the economic and political modernization of Kazakhstan.”⁴⁹ The main issue facing the two countries was the delimitation of the border. As a nomadic people, Kazakhs are very sensitive to border threats and are willing to give up some rights for the sake of security.⁵⁰ Kazakhstan was one of the first Central Asian countries to tackle and solve this issue inherited from the Soviet Era. China and Kazakhstan also make great trade partners. China with its vast population is energy hungry and Kazakhstan is happy to supply. Another concern is the overlapping of ethnic groups of the two countries and China’s issue with protecting its security against religious extremism. Both countries have maintained friendly and reciprocal relations since Kazakhstan’s independence in 1991.

Security

Once a testing ground for the Soviet Union’s nuclear program, Kazakhstan had seen the devastating effects of nuclear weapons. In the area of Semipalatinsk nomadic Kazakhs had suffered from these testing with “still births, deformities, cancers, and mental illness.”⁵¹ It was a challenging issue for Nazarbayev to navigate at the outset of independence because of his

personal experience with the nuclear testing. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Kazakhstan inherited over 1200 nuclear warheads (ICBMs).⁵² Nazarbayev skill as a statesman would be tested in regards to Kazakhstan's nuclear weapons. Many people in his own country were against nuclear testing and for good reason. These same advisors though were not against the country owning the nuclear weapons. There was a range of beliefs ranging from total disarmament to trading the weapons for security deals from the other nuclear countries. President Nazarbayev carefully negotiated a package that included concessions in trade, energy and aid when he signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992. He was able to keep his personal beliefs regarding nuclear weapons in tact all the while keeping the best interests of his country at the forefront.

For many countries in Central Asia the Islamic resurgences is a real security issue. Kazakhstan has vowed to fight terrorism and its commitment to growth in its armed forces backs this claim. Since independence there has been an increase in spending on the modernization of the military. There also has been amendments made to set up a Counter-terrorism Commission to stop radical Islamic propaganda. The goal is to build the army of Kazakhstan so that the army does not have to actual flex its muscle to deter attack from aggressors. Kazakhstan lies in a precarious position situated next to China whose population growth per year is equal to the entire population of Kazakhstan.⁵³

As for the insurgency, many measures have been taken by the government to stifle the rise of these groups. Laws in Kazakhstan give the Supreme Court power to ban any group that they feel is of terrorist or extremist in nature. Among the groups banned in 2006 are the IMU, the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban.⁵⁴ During the violent uprisings in 2011 it

was difficult to tell if the attacks were from “socio-economic injustice” or terrorist groups since no official claims have been communicated by the alleged terrorists.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Is Kazakhstan an anomaly among the former Soviet Republics? Is its authoritarian government with emphasis to civic nation building and multi-faceted foreign policy approach a key to its stability? Among its Central Asian neighbors it is the most stable. However, its lack of democratic reform and continued growth of Western influence in the country could set the stage for a rise in dissent among the people. A ripe field just waiting for the harvest of Islamic militants. President Nazarbayev has almost single handedly built the nation-state of Kazakhstan by putting economy before democracy and courting global powers other than Russia. The Republic of Kazakhstan is well on its way of taking its place as one of the top 30 countries in the world.

³² Zhulduz Baizakova and Roger N. McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers to Islamic Radicalization in Kazakhstan* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2015), PDF e-book.

³³ Glenn E Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1997), PDF e-book.

³⁴ Tredinnick, *An Illustrated History of Kazakhstan*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dena Sholk, "Understanding Kazakhstan's Politics, Again," *The Diplomat*, March 25, 2016, xx, www.thediplomat.com/2016/03/understanding-kazakhstans-politics-again

³⁸ Mukesh Mishra, "Constitutional Development in Independent Kazakhstan: A Review," *Himalayan & Central Asian Studies* 12, no. 3/4 (July 2008).

³⁹ Reuel R. Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics' and Kazakhstan's emerging role as a geo-strategic player in Central Asia," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 3 (September 2009).

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⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Sébastien Peyrouse, "Nationhood And The Minority Question In Central Asia. The Russians In Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59.3 (2007).

⁴³ Nursultan Nazarbayev, *The Concept of Peace and Public Consent* (Astana: Zhasyl Orda, 2014).

⁴⁴ Jeremy Tredinnick, *An Illustrated History Of Kazakhstan : Asia's Heartland In Context* (Hong Kong: Odyssey, 2014).

⁴⁵ Baizakova and McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers*.

⁴⁶ Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember, *Countries and Their Cultures* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001), 1167.

⁴⁷ Luca Anceschi, *Kazakhstan's Foreign Policy: Regime Neo -Eurasianism in the Nazarbaev Era* (Routledge, 2015).

⁴⁸ Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002).

⁴⁹ Kaan Diyarbakiriloglu and Sureyya Yigit, "Kazakh Multi Vector Foreign Policy in Action," *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 71.

⁵⁰ Dena Sholk, "Kazakhstan's New Capital: Its Importance and Implications," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 13, no. 2 (July 2012).

⁵¹ Jonathan Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan* (London: Continuum, 2009), 127.

⁵² Jonathan Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan* (London: Continuum, 2009), 137.

⁵³ Ashley Flint, "The Modernization of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces," *Military Technology* 38, no. 5 (May 2014): 57.

⁵⁴ Baizakova and McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers*

⁵⁵ Baizakova and McDermott, *Reassessing the Barriers*.

CHAPTER THREE: GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION

A country situated at the gateway between west and east has both Byzantine and Persian influence. The ancient silk road crossed the country, bringing economic and culture advantages, but also an easy route to invaders over the course of Georgia's history. Today the ancient Silk Road is looked to as the key to the revival of Georgia. The country seeks to use its placement between Europe and Asia as once again a bridge for trade including most importantly oil and gas.

GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of Georgia is nestled as a gateway between Europe and Asia with an area of almost 70,000 square kilometers. It is a commercial intersection with very strong neighbors. It is roughly the size of the State of South Carolina. Its capital city, T'bilisi, is located in the southeastern part of the country and is the political and cultural center of the country. Georgia shares a border with Russia to the north and east. Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey also border the Republic of Georgia. The topography of the land is extremely varied with high mountains in the north, forests in the south, the Caspian basin to the east and the large Rioni and Enguri rivers running into the Black Sea. Georgia's 25,000 rivers help power many hydroelectric stations across the country.⁵⁶

The mountains form natural barriers that give different regions their linguistic flavor. The Greater Caucasus mountains also act as a barrier of the cold air from the north. The

mountains of the Caucasus are actually the highest mountain range in Europe, home of Mr. Shkara the second highest peak of the range at 5,193 meters.⁵⁷ The Black Sea gives Georgia a subtropical climate with both high precipitation and high humidity. Warm, moist air in the coastal lowlands are the perfect place for palm trees to grow.

HISTORY

Georgia's history and land has been influenced by its Arab, Mongol, Persian, and Turkish neighbors. In the fifteenth century it became the only Christian area in a region of Muslim kingdoms. After the invasion of the Monguls in the thirteenth century, the Ottomans and Persians vied for control of Georgia. The centuries of havoc caused Georgia to turn to Russia for protection. They were annexed by Russia in the 19th century. During the uneasy times of the Russian Revolution Georgia declared its independence. Regardless of the fact that over 20 countries recognized its independence, the Red Army invaded and Georgia become part of the Soviet Union.

Georgia was not immune to Soviet collectivization or Stalin's purges even though he was from Georgian decent. The Soviet Union's education system helped the Georgians to have some of the highest education levels. The Soviet medical systems was not as kind to Georgia. Heighten disease from terrible living conditions coupled with an underfunded healthcare system left Georgia with some serious issues. Economically Georgia felt the effects of the Soviet system. Georgia had to sell its natural resources at a very low price while having to pay astronomical prices for supplies they needed. Georgia was also not able to benefit from its

tourism industries as its revenue was sent directly to Moscow. The Georgian economy suffered severe blows as its independence neared in 1991. The strikes that were supposed to help gain political clout actually crippled the economy.

Initially after independence Georgia embraced liberal democracy but with strong and deep rooted Soviet presence and ideology that proved extremely difficult. Like other former republics of the Soviet Union Georgia has inexperienced elite and limiting finances. Georgia was no different in having to play the balancing game of keeping Russia close but not too close for its own security. Eventually the desire would be to look to the West as an example of democracy as well as protector.⁵⁸ Shevardnadze was the first elected president. His later years of his administration were marred by corruption in his administration. He believed in the Russian idea of a “managed” democracy. Shevardnadze supported freedoms that would ultimately serve his political purpose. Elections were planned with the understanding he would win or insure victory by taking the election into his own hands.⁵⁹ This corrupt ideology permeated throughout the government and would lead to severe consequences. Mass uprisings would arise as the citizens of Georgia were fed up with the corruption and poverty of their nation.⁶⁰

To make a break from the corruption of Shevardnadze presidency a largely un-violent uprising that would become known as the Rose Revolution took place in 2003. Groups of younger Georgians such as Kmara, (translated as Enough) were able to mobilize and create sympathy among a large group of the Georgian public.⁶¹ In 2008 a five day war broke out with Russia over the region of South Ossetia. Russia was the main supporter of the separatist and the conflict damaged the economy of Georgia.

ECONOMY

Like most post-Soviet Republics Georgia inherited a myriad of issues and economic reform was on the top of the agenda. During Soviet rule it was one of the most prosperous of the republics. Georgia's president at the time Zviad Gamsakhurdia knew little about economics. The country experienced hyperinflation and by 1994 its GDP was around 20% of its levels in 1990. Georgia's budget deficits have forced it to look for international help in financing. Through 2004 Georgia has been in different and challenging agreements with the IMF.

During the Soviet era, Georgia was the main supplier of citrus fruits, grapes and tea to the Soviet Union. It has an ideal climate to make agriculture an important part of its economy. It was not until 1996 that Georgia made an effort to privatize land ownership. Georgia has natural resources that include manganese, coal, iron, lead, and of course oil. The nation's industry includes steel, aircraft, machine tools, automobiles, trucks, textiles, shoes and tractors. There was a somewhat small level of recovery with the building of the Baku-Supsa pipeline but growth again began to flatten because of numerous factors. The economic crisis of Russia and Turkey have a severe effect on the Georgian economy. Both Russia and Turkey account for 40% of both export and import of Georgia. Georgia suffered a severe drought and influx of Chechnya refugees, further feeding the economic downturn. When the two remaining refineries were closed Georgia was forced to import over 90% of its petroleum products further hurting its yearning for economic growth.⁶²

Georgia depends on Russia its power and other economic essentials in trade for wine, fruit and other agricultural products. Georgia is looking to diversify its trading and expand to the European Union and Turkey. [more on trade partners here] In 2006 its exports were 1.76 billion and imports were 3.32 billion.⁶³

Other areas that Georgia has tried to streamline its economy is reducing the number of different taxes and making income taxes a flat rate of 12%. Georgia has also introduced a system to help entrepreneurs to be able to open business with relatively small red tape. If an government fails to act within a certain timeframe it is considered consent. It also is seeking to eliminate import duties to further stimulate trade. Internationally Georgia is seen as the “world’s fastest-reforming economy” in 2008 and it is the 18th easiest place to do business putting it in the same grouping of countries such as Germany.⁶⁴ There is concern among citizens of the level of poverty, low pensions and unemployment of 12%.⁶⁵ Currently the country is also dealing with a currency crisis. It decline 21% in 2015 and in February of 2016 it was its lowest at 2.5 to the U.S. dollar.⁶⁶ To combat these issues Georgia has established a free-trade agreement with China in 2016 and construction has begun on a trade hub on the Black Sea.

POLITICS

Georgia is considered a Democratic Republic. While having a tumultuous beginning and a peaceful Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia has revived an almost failed state to a growing market democracy. Referendums have been passed in steps to decentralize control and give the local governments increasing authority. Overall the government has sought to openly call

out corruption and have free and fair elections. There have been three democratically elected presidents since Georgia's independence in 1991.

Government Structure

Georgia has had a constitution in place since August 24, 1995. It has been amended five times: February, April, and June 2004, December 2005, and January 2007.

Georgia has an executive branch with a president and State Chancellery. The president is elected to 5 year terms and is eligible for a second term only. Georgia's current president, Giorgi Margvelashvili was elected in 2013 with 62% of the vote. He was a former Deputy Prime Minister and was known as an education reformer in the country. Margvelashvili was not a member of a political party in the country but received the nomination from the Georgia Dream Coalition.

Georgia's legislative branch is a unicameral parliament of 150 members. 73 of those seats are directly elected by constituency with at least 50% of the vote. The rest of the seats go to political parties proportionately. These parties must win at least 5% of the national vote.⁶⁷ In 2005 voted to decentralize power from the capital Tbilisi to local governments in the regions of the country.

The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and local courts. In 2015 the Constitutional Court ruled that the country's electoral boundaries were unconstitutional. In a region like Kutaisi it takes 162,732 votes to win a seat, but in Kazbegi, only 5,810. Making their vote have way more influence than a Kutaisian.⁶⁸

Currently, there are 25 parties running in the 2016 parliament election. The main political parties are the Georgia Dream (GD) and the opposition party United National Movement (UNM) (BBC). The UNM actually held power from after the Rose Revolution in 2003 to 2013.

ETHNIC-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

DemographicS

Georgia is made up of a majority of ethnic Georgians (70%) with only 6% of their population made up of Russians. Other groups that are represented are Armenians, Azeris, Ossetians and Abkhaz. Many of the Armenians settled in the south. Of the approximately five and half million people who live in the Republic of Georgia over half live in urban areas. [peace keeping] According to the Republic of Georgia's official website the countries make up is approximately 83.8% Georgian, 6.5% Azeri, 5.7% Armenians, and only 1.5% Russians.⁶⁹

There are two regions in Georgia that have had secessionist agendas, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Violence and civil war has erupted between those regions and Georgia throughout its history. Both of these territories have close connections with Russia and in 2008 after an armed conflict, Russia formally recognized their independence. There are constant fears in Georgia that these two states are next on Russia's list to annex.⁷⁰

Ethnic relations have not been on the forefront of the Georgian legislative agenda. It was not until 2004 that any policy initiations were made to address the ethnic diversity in the nation. Georgia's situation is unique in that upon independence Georgia was donor dependent

on the world stage. This status has put pressure to comply with Western values and norms as a democracy and show signs on the outside of civic nation building.⁷¹ Because there is such a large percentage of Georgians it has been challenging for the government to implement legislation on ethnic issues. There is a real fear of destabilizing the country and there is little power in the government to actually implement such policy. There has been no real attempt to integrate or give the minorities in Georgia rights.⁷²

Language

Georgians cling tightly to their language as a way of ethnic self-identification under Soviet Rule, they are the least “Russified” among the former Soviet Republics.⁷³ Even during that time Georgian was the official state language. Over 70% of the population claims Georgian as their first language. Those who speak it call the Georgian language Kartveli. Literature that is written in Kartveli dates back to the 5th century AD. The Georgian language has its own unique 33 letter alphabet which is one of only thirteen internationally recognized alphabets. In the native language the country is not called Georgia, but Sakartvelo.⁷⁴

Religion

The majority of the population in Georgia are predominately Orthodox Christians. They were one of the first to accept and convert to Christianity in 330 AD. Over 70% are either Georgian Orthodox or Russian Orthodox. The minority religious groups in the country are Muslim with 5% and Roman Catholicism and Judaism. Overall there is a tolerance that is

extended to the minority religions with communities all over the country. The majority of Georgians say they are a member of the Church and the leader, Patriarch Ilia II is one of the most respected public leaders in the country. Contrary to other areas of Europe of church involvement declining, in Georgia it is actually growing by leaps and bounds.⁷⁵

FOREIGN POLICY

Georgia's geopolitical importance is much larger than the square mileage of its country. Its strategic location between Turkey, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Black Sea gives it a prominent place in foreign policy in the region. Georgia has also looked beyond the region into the West to not only diversify its economy but insure cooperation in other matters. One of its main priorities is to become closer to the European Union and in 2006 signed a plan under the European Union's European Neighborhood Policy.⁷⁶ Georgia is a member of the United Nations and the NATO's Partnership for Peace Program. Many of the world's strongest countries house embassies in Georgia's capital city, Tbilisi.

Georgia is trying to form a foreign policy identity. It is in a challenging position as a former Soviet Republic and the desire to "desovietize" and a desire to belong in the West. Its identity as a Christian nation in a sea of Islamic ones also can play a part in its foreign policy orientation. Moving forward it is likely that Georgia will continue its quest for its Europeanist identity.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

Georgia may not seem like a post-Soviet success story like Kazakhstan with its poverty, instability and mounting debt, but the country is making stride for a stable multi-party democracy. Amid rising political violence in the fall of 2016 there are still issues of poverty among its citizens. It is possible that they desire to be in NATO and the EU could be clouding the vision of the leaders of Georgia. To be a true successful state a country needs to be not only BY the people but FOR the people.

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⁶³ Glenn E. Curtis, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ([Washington, D.C.]: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1995), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/>.

⁶⁴ Glenn E. Curtis, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ([Washington, D.C.]: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1995), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/>.

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⁷² *Ibid.*, 282.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 278.

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CHAPTER FOUR: UKRAINE

INTRODUCTION

The country of Ukraine has experienced a tumultuous and violent course of history. Bordered by seven different countries, it is surrounded by a myriad of diverse nations and cultures. Through it all, Ukraine has formed its own national identity with a common language, cultural and family traditions. There is a sense of a common religion as the country has clung to its heritage. It is a bridge between Europe and Asia, between the west and east. Unfortunately, the ability to transport natural gas across the country as only made it more vulnerable to Russia's demands. The stability of the Ukraine could be the key to the stability of Europe. So far since 1991 the country has experienced two revolutions and still remains volatile in regards to peace between Russia and the rest of the world.

GEOGRAPHY

Ukraine with over 232,200 square miles is the second largest country in Europe and roughly the size of the state of Texas.⁷⁸ It has common borders with seven countries: Belarus, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovakia. It shares its longest boundary with Russia and a 1836 mile border with the Black Sea which gives it access to even more countries. Ukraine is made up of mainly plains that in the Northern and Coastland Lowlands are called a steppe. The mountainous regions make up merely 5% of the land in the Ukraine. The Carpathian Mountains border the west and then the Crimean Mountains along the southern border of the Crimean Peninsula. It is important to note that Ukraine lacks any natural barriers.

This allows for the free movement of people (including invaders) through the country. Ukraine also has the 3rd longest river in Europe, the Dneiper, a large supplier of hydro-electric power. The Dneiper flows down the middle of the country and forms an informal boundary between the Left Bank of the east and the Right Bank of the west. Ukraine's capital, Kiev is located in the northern central part of the country along the river Dneiper. Over 60% of the land in the Ukraine is covered in very fertile soil called the "chernozem". The black soil coupled with temperate climate has helped Ukraine earn its title of breadbasket. In the 1980's the Ukraine produced more than 46% of the Soviet Union agriculture.⁷⁹

HISTORY

When the tsar of Russia fell during the Russian revolution, Ukraine seized the opportunity to declare its independence and formed the Ukrainian People's Republic. By 1920 the Bolsheviks prevailed and the Ukrainian People's Republic became the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Much of western Ukraine was occupied by Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. At the beginning of its time in the Soviet Union, the Ukraine was given a level of autonomy in regards to its culture. Ukrainian communists were able to locally govern the country. However, in the 1930's strict Russification and persecution of those who resisted began from Josef Stalin. A famine in 1933 killed between 7-10 million Ukrainians. In 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union and the Ukraine became a German Colony. During World War II, six million Ukrainian lives were lost and 18,000 villages were destroyed.⁸⁰ Both Western and Eastern Ukraine have been ruled by different countries throughout its history. The past seventy years are the only time that the country has been ruled as one. The Central and

Western part of the country has always been more influenced by Europe and the Eastern and Southern by Russia.⁸¹

The Orange Revolution named after the campaign color of the presidential candidate Yushchenko was a stand against “election fraud” in the Ukraine in 2004.⁸² Yushchenko had been appointed the Prime Minister in 2000. His work at the National Bank informed his public image as an honest and effective leader. He recovered energy revenues and cracked down against the crony capitalism that had become rampant in President Kuchma’s term. He tackled social problems such as health care and overdue pension payments and helped turn Ukraine’s economy around. In May of 2001 President Kuchma forced Yushchenko out of office. The following year Yushchenko’s political party (Our Ukraine) won 31% of the seats in the parliament. In November of 2002 Yanukovich was appointed Prime Minister. He was appointed to eventually become the successor of Kuchma. After the obvious fixing of the election the seventeen day, non-violent movement reversed the results and Yushchenko became president. Yushchenko was a friend of the Georgian leader Saakashvili and they declared the revolution in both Georgia and the Ukraine were shaping a “new wave of liberty and democracy.” While the Orange Revolution was peaceful it failed to change the political culture of the Ukraine.⁸³

In 2014 when President Yanukovych rejected the European Association Agreement this sparked protest in Independence Square in the heart of Kiev. This rejection came after a swift policy shift from pro-European to pro-Russian with a discount gas deal and a \$15 billion dollar line of credit. The cry of the protestors was that the Ukrainian “government robbed the public rather than served it.”⁸⁴ Yanukovych claimed he could not sign the agreement because Ukraine had financial difficulties that only Russia could help solve. The Euromaidan protest became

known as the “Revolution of Dignity.” The revolution initially started as a pro-European protest, then turned opposition. Students began the charge calling for more European integration. At the outset there were no political colors or banners, but when government backed attacks started producing casualties, it became a national movement. The Euromaidan movement was now calling for the resignation of Yanukovich. The Rada of Ukraine tried to respond by passing legislature that made these demonstrations illegal.⁸⁵ In February the government violently fought the peaceful protesters which in sited even more anger and passion. The presidential palace was stormed and Yanukovich fled. The ousting of a pro-Russian president stuck fear in the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and the annexation of the Crimean oblast took place.⁸⁶

The revolution produced elections in May of 2014 Petro Poroshenko received the majority of the vote. He held parliamentary elections to help restructure the corrupt government. For the first time in history the October 26,2014 elections did not choose a Communist to hold a seat in parliament. On the one year anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity five very different political parties sign an agreement that orientates Ukraine towards Europe.⁸⁷

ECONOMY

As a part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine’s importance cannot be overstated. Its rich and fertile soil produced almost half of the Soviet Union’s output in the 1980’s.⁸⁸ The farms in Ukraine produced large amounts of meat, milk and grain. It also provided a great deal of raw materials for industry such as iron ore, coal, minerals, and clay. Heavy industry exists in the eastern portion of the country. Ukraine has been making the transition from an agricultural

economy to an industrial economy even while it was still a part of the Soviet Union. After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 Ukraine sought to transition from a centrally planned market to a supply and demand market. The shock-therapy route that was taken was detrimental. The economy responded by plummeting while the country experienced a five year hyperinflation. To make matters more difficult, over 75% of the Ukraine's oil is imported, making it vulnerable to external influences. Russia is the Ukraine's main trading partner and enjoys flexing its muscles to put pressure on the Ukraine to make pro-Russian deals. Political and social reforms have continually failed, making it difficult for the economy to flourish in the Ukraine. There is widespread corruption and much work to be done in the area of development and infrastructure.⁸⁹ Currently the main imports to the Ukraine are: chemicals, raw rubber, cars, trucks, and wood. The main Exports are: aircrafts, ships, agriculture, food, and one of the world's largest exporters of iron and steel.⁹⁰ The Ukraine's ultimate goal is to have an open market economy and become a member in the European Union.

As of February of 2016, the economy of Ukraine is in a volatile state. Ukraine is fighting a Russian backed separatist war in the east while still reeling from the annexation of Crimea to Russia. Their currency has devalued over 200% and the average monthly income of a Ukrainian is \$220 a month. The continued corruption in the government that is blocking economic reforms has forced economy minister to resign and has its loan from the IMF in jeopardy.⁹¹

POLITICS

The Ukraine government structure is a Presidential Republic. The president who serves a five year term is considered the head of state and commander in chief. He or she appoints the

cabinet and is in charge of foreign policy, national defense. The president hold veto power. The Prime Minister is considered the head of the government, in charge of economic policy and commanding a majority in Parliament. The unicameral parliament called the *Verkhovna Rada* has 450 deputies that serve four year terms. The power between the president and prime minister is divided as to produce conflict. The constitution can only be amended by the people in a popular referenda.⁹²

ETHNIC-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Demographics

The political boundaries of the Ukraine do not match the ethnic boundaries in the region. There are other peoples than ethnic Ukrainians that live within the country's borders. In 2001 the largest portion of the country are ethnic Ukrainians but there also over 8 million Russians that call Ukraine their homeland. In urban areas Ukrainians are actually the minority as opposed to the majority in rural areas. The ethnic makeup of the country includes Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians in the west; Belorussians in the North; Moldavians in the south; and Russians in the east and north. In the Crimea there are native Greeks, Tatars, and Karaims. After the genocide famine in 1933 ethnic Russians immigrated to fill empty villages. In modern day Ukraine, ethnic communities enjoy government support for their cultural development. [Ember] Over the course of its history western Ukraine has interacted with Europe. The occupation by Poland, Germany, Romania and the Soviet Union only strengthened a strong sense of nationalism.

Language

In 1989 approximately 87 percent of the population spoke Ukrainian as their native language. Twelve percent of Ukrainians spoke Russian as their native language. Ukrainian among the other ethnic languages were repressed during the reign of the Soviet Union.⁹³ During the years of 1959-1979 the western part of the country resisted the Russian language while the east learned Russian. After independence the Ukrainian languages went through a revival throughout the country. The country itself was trying to adhere to a resident and civic loyalty not necessarily a ethnic or linguistic requirement for citizenship.⁹⁴

Religion

The Ukraine is predominately Christian. As of 2010 around 50 percent were Orthodox Christians and 27 percent Protestant. There are 2 million Muslims who live in the Ukraine and about 1 million Roman Catholic. Only around 10 percent of the population would identify as atheist. When Ukraine declared independence and adopted its own constitution, the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion was added. This provided for the right to practice one's religion of choosing and guaranteed the separation of church and state.⁹⁵

FOREIGN POLICY

Ukraine's foreign policy is dictated by the state of its economy. With no natural barriers they do not have the luxury to remain neutral with a non-aligned status. Ukraine's foreign policy since independence has been a multi-vector approach. Their desire would be to

cooperate with all regional powers, “extracting concessions while maintaining autonomy.” This foreign policy stance has helped with the Ukraine’s short term goals, but has not developed long term goals such as economic development and democratization.⁹⁶ Ukraine has made it a habit to try and secure investments and security from the west while seeking trade and energy from Russia. In World War I and II Germany had a negative impact on the country, but that is no longer the case. Germany would be an example of a country that now gives military advice and assistance.⁹⁷

Foreign gas exchange has been an issue with Ukraine for decades. Many times the country cannot pay for its energy imports. Russia has historically manipulated prices and the supply of so that the Ukraine would not become economically independent. In 2001-2002 Ukraine developed a cooperation with Russia. The president at the time, Kuchma, declared that if doors were closing in Europe that Ukraine would move towards Russia. The EU put pressure on the Ukraine for energy reforms, but Kuchma would dismiss Yushchenko in April of 2001. Yushchenko as prime minister of Ukraine, was making strides to rid the energy sector and economy of corruption. The Ukraine wanted to keep the EU as a close enough ally in the event that negotiations with Russia were broken. Ukraine is more powerful when they are playing off both the EU and Russia.⁹⁸ In 2003-2004, Ukraine was leery of negotiated its gas debt alone with Russia and brought in a third party. Investing and strengthening in the relationship with the EU while negotiating with Russia did help the Ukraine achieve its short term goal of settling its gas debt. The Orange Revolution in 2004 brought a pro-western leader in Yushchenko. This would make Russia very uncomfortable and they would try tactics like shutting off the gas to the Ukraine in 2006 to flex their foreign policy muscles with the Ukraine. After 2009-2010, there

arose a form of Ukraine fatigue within the European Union when Yanukovich (a pro-Russian president) rejected membership proposals. He declared that Ukraine was to be a “bridge, not a one way street.”⁹⁹

The Revolution of Dignity in 2014 resulted from another incoherent shift from Western orientation to Russian cooperation. Yanukovich struck a deal with Russian president Vladimir Putin and sold \$15 billion dollars in bonds while simultaneously announcing that he would not sign the European Union Association Agreement.¹⁰⁰ When Yanukovich was ousted from his presidential palace and fled. Russia lost its passive and corrupt Ukrainian leader. It was at that point that the annexation of Crimea took place.

GUAM which is formed by Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova is an alignment that is complex and unreliable. Membership in organizations such as NATO and the EU have caused tremendous strife in the country. Yushchenko was in favor of membership to NATO in 2008. Russia did not support this measure and surprisingly neither did Ukrainians. There was little public support to push towards.

CONCLUSION

Ukraine's is still currently in a tumultuous state. Ongoing conflict with Russia is wreaking havoc on the country. Ukraine's main issue is the Ukraine's lack of skill in nation building. It has been challenging for the new oligarchs to mesh with the old Soviet and create a true independent state of Ukraine.¹⁰¹ The Orange Revolution tried to remedy this but without the intense struggle of a violent revolution, political change did not come. Two years after the Euromaidan uprising corruption is still rampant. More than 80 per cent of the Ukrainian

population feel that corruption is still a major problem. The government cannot move forward with the amount of corruption. The country is in a precarious position, much of the country's economy lies in the hands a oligarchs. Putting too much pressure on them for change could lead to collapse. There is optimism that Ukraine can eventually overcome the corruption and become politically stable. Only time will tell if the continued pressure from reformists will bring about real change.¹⁰² Ukraine must present a united front if they are going to be able peacefully resolve issues within their separatist territories.

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⁷⁹ Ibid, 43.

⁸⁰ Timothy L. Gall and Susan B. Gall, *Worldmark Chronology of the Nations 4 4* (Detroit, Mich: Gale, 1999).

⁸¹ Yuiry Shveda and Joung Ho Park, "Ukraine's revolution of dignity: The dynamics of Euromaidan," *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, January 2016.

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⁸³ Economist, "Saving Ukraine: How the West Can Help," *The Economist*, last modified March 1, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21597897-turmoil-ukraine-chance-west-prove-it-still-force-good-how>.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 9.

⁸⁵ Shveda and Park, "Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity," 87.

⁸⁶ Andrey Kurkov, "Russia's game in Ukraine," *Time International (Asia Edition)* 183, no. 16 (April 2014): 9.

⁸⁷ Shveda and Park, "Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity," 87.

⁸⁸ Hanna Chumachenko, s.v. "Ukraine," in *In Countries and Their Cultures*(New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001).

⁸⁹ Douglas Burton, "Gen-Xers Give Ukraine Hope," *Insight on the News* 18, no. 7 (February 2002): 24.

⁹⁰ Gall and Gall, *Ukraine*.

⁹¹ Geoffrey Berlin, "Can Ukraine Save Itself?," *The Globalist*, last modified February 25, 2016, <https://www.theglobalist.com/ukraine-economy-politics-uprising/>.

⁹² Chumachenko, Ukraine.

⁹³ Chumachenko, Ukraine.

⁹⁴ John Armstrong, "Ukraine Evolving Foreign Policy in a New State," *World Affairs* 167, no. 1 (2004): 33.

⁹⁵ Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember, *Countries and Their Cultures* (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2001).

⁹⁶ Elena Gnedina and Evghenia Sleptsova, "From Multi-vector to Vectorless: Ukraine's Policy towards Russia and the European Union," *Russia's Changing Economic and Political Regimes: The Putin Years and Afterwards*, 2013, 166.

⁹⁷ John Armstrong, "Ukraine Evolving Foreign Policy in a New State," *World Affairs* 167, no. 1 (2004): 33.

⁹⁸ Elena Gnedina and Evghenia Sleptsova, "From Multi-vector to Vectorless."

⁹⁹ Viktor Yanukovich, "Viktor Yanukovich: 'Ukraine Will Become a Bridge Between East and West'," *WSJ*, last modified February 10, 2010, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704804204575069251843839386>.

¹⁰⁰ Kurkov, "Russia's Game in Ukraine."

¹⁰¹ Shveda and Park, "Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity," 88.

¹⁰² Oleksiy Kuzmenko, "Two Years After Uprising, Ukraine Still Battling Corruption," *VOA*, last modified February 25, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/a/two-years-after-uprising-ukraine-still-battling-corruption/3208943.html>.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Each of the three case studies in this thesis gained independence from the Soviet Union in the late twentieth century. Soviet ideology ran deep throughout the framework of each new nation. Kazakhstan, Georgia, and the Ukraine were faced with the daunting task of forming their own nation. Reviving their ethnicity that had been repressed and undoing the hardship that being part of the USSR entailed. Each country had a very limited amount of finances and an inexperienced elite. Reforms had to be made to their economy and political structure. Kazakhstan, Georgia and the Ukraine each went about their nation-building in a different manner and each had different results.

One of the main findings I found in each of the case studies was the role language played in the development of a new nation in addition to the other factors of economy, foreign policy and ethnic governmental relations. For instance, in the Republic of Kazakhstan, preservation of the Kazakh language is a priority of the country. The official state language is Kazakh only, yet to appease the Russian minority, it was declared that Russian would be used in inter-ethnic communication. In Georgia, the Georgian (Kartveli) language is the state language and over 70% claim it as their first language. Under Soviet rule Georgians clung to their language as a way to hold on to their ethnicity. In the Ukraine the country was divided in their adherence to the Ukrainian language during Soviet rule. Between 1959-1979 the Eastern part of the country learned Russian while the West resisted. Ukrainian is the official state language but the country is careful to not make linguistics a requirement for citizenship.

The trends that I found in my research is that foreign policy is strongly related to economic concerns. A country like Kazakhstan whose economy is was strong had more success in their foreign policy. On the other hand, the Ukraine’s foreign policy is dictated by the state of its economy. How it relates to countries like Russia depend mainly on what economic concession they are in need of.

Another trend that became evident was the role of the ethnic make up of the country in regards to the level of unrest. Country borders are rarely drawn from the standpoint of grouping together by ethnicity and like the Middle East, Central Asia has been privy to the effects of artificial boundaries. The more a country tries to address these ethnic issues, the more less violate these ethnic issues seem to be. Georgia has a general distrust of minorities and their nationalism has led to being exclusive and excluding.

Factor Case	Foreign Policy Strategy	Economy Situation	Ethnic-Governmental Relations	Political Stability Development
Kazakhstan	Successful Multi-Vector	Precarious Position	Kazakhization	Gradual Evolutionary Changes
Georgia	Europeanist	Improving	Nationalism led to Exclusive & Excluding	Rose Revolution Post 2008 War
Ukraine	Failed Multi-Vector	Poor	Security Based has led to Conflict	Orange Revolution Revolution of Dignity

Table 1: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

KAZAKHSTAN

Foreign Policy

From the outset of Kazakhstan's independence the main goal of Kazakhstan's foreign policy is to counter balance how much it depended on Russia during the Soviet control. The main way it has done this is with relationships with Europe, the United States and China. President Nazarbayev has tactfully navigated alternating cooperation between Russia, the west and China. It has been careful to not exclude or pick sides or exclude any one power.¹⁰³ This multi vector foreign policy has helped it grow into the regional power that it is and has helped its nation building efforts.

Economy

With the drop in oil prices in 2015-2016, Kazakhstan's economy has been weakened and is likely to enter its first recession since 1998. When oil was trading at over \$100 per barrel the economy in the country was able to grow by 6-7 percent. The current year's growth is projected at .1 percent.¹⁰⁴ Other than a few large billion dollar projects to prepare for the Expo 2017 in Astana, the economy is bleak. The currency is still in a downward spiral at 340 to the dollar down from 140. Industrial production, retail sales, real estate, all marked significant downturns.¹⁰⁵ In October of 2016 talks resumed between President Nazarbayev and Russian president, Vladimir Putin on cooperation on a myriad of issues. At a cooperation forum in Astana attended by both leaders Nazarbayev declared that Russia was an important trade and economic partner from Kazakhstan.¹⁰⁶

Ethnic-Government Relations

The main way in which the nation of Kazakhstan differs from the other case studies is its efforts in making its ethnic-governmental relations a priority. The country was faced with a daunting task as the indigenous people, the Kazakhs, were the minority at the outset of independence. In 1995, the “social institute of interethnic relations harmonization,” the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan was founded.¹⁰⁷ From its inception it has sought to promote peace, friendship, national unity, tolerance and consent not just in concept but in action. The stability of ethnic relations are at the core of the government’s policy in Kazakhstan. Minorities are not considered minorities but all have equal standing. Places like the Palace of Consent were built to also promote religious tolerance and combat religion extremism. Nazarbayev promotes this Kazakhization with speeches that hail the country’s strength from its unity.¹⁰⁸ This process has been an effective tool in harmonizing both ethnic and religion relations in Kazakhstan.

GEORGIA

Foreign Policy

Georgia seeks to form its own identity in its foreign policy. Its tendency is to lean towards Europe in order to “desovietize”¹⁰⁹ Its identity as a Christian nation surrounded by Islamic countries also dictates its orientation towards Europe and the West. It has sought membership in both the EU and NATO which ruffles the feathers of Putin and the Russian Federation.

Economy

Georgia's corruption has played a role in the political stability of the country. Corruption led to shrinking tax base and the country didn't have money to take care of basic functions (pensions, salaries of civil servants) led to Rose Revolution. Once it started to make reforms, Georgia started to make new strides towards stability as a whole. Limiting import duties and simplifying income taxes have all helped the fast reforming economy. In regards to doing business in the country it is on the same playing field as countries like Germany.

Ethnic-Government Relations

Georgia has an ethnic make-up today of around 70% Georgians to only 6% of Russians. They do not have the pressure of numbers to force them to integrate and include minorities. Overall the country has a general mistrust of minorities and in their nation building and feeling so Georgian nationalism Georgians have become exclusive and excluded minorities. There is an underinvestment in minorities. Regional governments are too weak to serve their people groups. Minorities face discrimination and barriers to health care, education and social services. There is a greater general mistrust of minorities in autonomous regions (Abkhaz & Ossetians). Russia has signed agreements with both regions and there is a real threat that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia could be annexed by Russian in the future.

Government is too centralized, regional government is weak. In 2013 power transferred peacefully from the United National Movement to the Georgian Dream Party. This peaceful change of power from one political party to another also brought about a change of power from the president to the prime minister and legislature. Pressure to align to EU and NATO

affects many areas and their biggest challenge that lies ahead is reconciling its foreign policy pro-western stance with the reality of normalizing relations with Russia.

UKRAINE

Foreign Policy

Ukraine has a failed multi-vector foreign policy. Since its independence it has suffered from a lack of cohesion in how it deals with neighboring countries in the region. At times when the Ukraine has tried to keep the European Union an ally it has only frustrated Russia. In trying to heed security from the west and economic interests from Russia it has not helped in regards to democratization or economic development.

Economy

The economic crisis made it difficult to implement reform in both economic and constitutional ways. The progress of the Ukraine in fighting corruption has been slow and has brought concern from members of the IMF. Many of its economic policies have failed and it is up to the leaders of the country to make sweeping reforms to fight this corruption and help bring the economy back on the road to recovery. Unfortunately oligarchy is the name of the game in the Ukraine. In 2015 Ukraine was ranked 130th out of 168 countries in corruption, worse than Russia. The glimmer of hope that sparked in the Euro Maiden election of the current president Poroshenko has crumbled to nothing. The key to the economy improving is security so that investors will take notice of Ukraine in a positive way.¹¹⁰

Ethnic-Government Relations

The history of occupation of the Ukraine by Poland, Germany, Romania and the Soviet Union, has ingrained a deep seeded Ukrainian nationalism. The Ukraine has been preoccupied with issues of state sovereignty and the integrity of its borders. These security based concerns inform how they react and respond to issues regarding minorities. The disconnect between the political boundaries and the ethnic boundaries of the country have brought to the forefront fear of succession and the breakdown of the country. There is a lack of legislative protection for the Russian minority of the country. The set up by the constitution of a centralized unitary state with little regional government power does not help the minorities spread throughout the Ukraine. Ukraine central government hears little from the local governing bodies. The way that security has informed their ethnic government relations has caused intense conflict. Ukraine failed to ensure the proper social and economic conditions for the Crimean Tatars' return.

Conclusion

The question that this thesis addresses is does Kazakhstan's commitment to invest in ethnic-government relations, make the economy a priority, and a multi-vector foreign policy have contributed to the overall stability of the nation? In trying to answer this research question and through my research in the other two case studies, I have actually come up with more questions than I have answers. There seems to be a myriad of factors that contribute to the political stability of a country and it is difficult to pinpoint which of the factors most improve a nation's political stability. More research needs to be done in regards to former Soviet Republics and why each of their attempts at nation-building have either been successful

or a failure. Even though Kazakhstan's main religion is Islam, Kazakh's were a minority at the outset of independence, and the government is a unitary state with an authoritarian president it is still stable compared to Georgia and the Ukraine. It seems the successful multi-vector foreign policy and the way the government has made Kazakhization a priority could account for a measure of that stability.

The other factors that have revealed themselves through this research seem to play a prominent role in stability are religion, the type of government the nation has, as well as the issue of state language.

Does the type of religion and whether or not the population has a nominal view or devout practice play a role in the political stability?

Does the type of government, whether it has a strong presidential authority, federalism or decentralized contribute to political stability?

Does the issue of the indigenous "mother tongue" of a nation and how prominent it remained during Soviet occupation play a role in the political stability as the nation is built?

In conclusion, the way Kazakhstan has set the core of their governmental framework to communicate its interethnic tolerance can be an example for other governments to glean from. President Nazarbayev has laid a firm foundation of how his government not only tolerates ethnic minorities, but actually celebrates the diversity of ethnicity in the nation. Over the next twelve months the importance of strong ethnic government relations in Kazakhstan will be put to the test as the country faces economic hardship and possible recession.

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